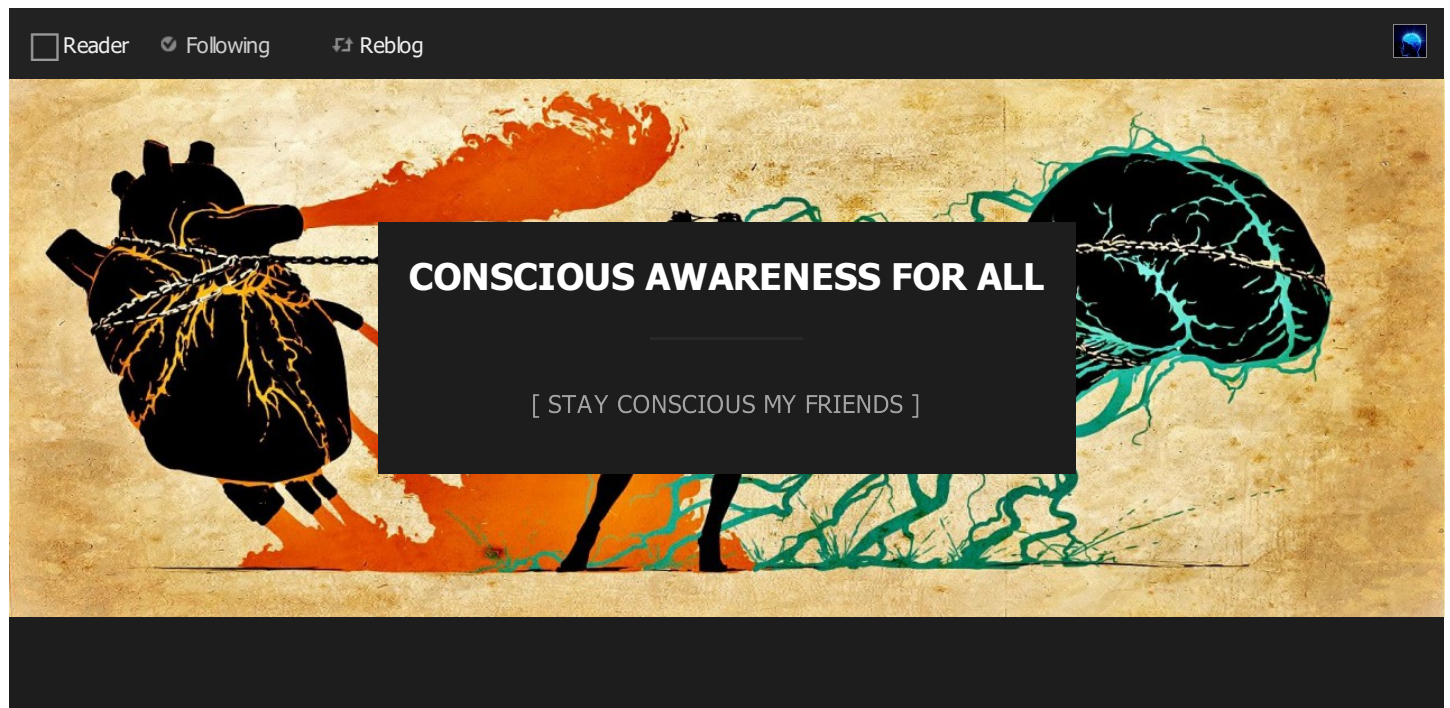




Bolivia Grants Mother Earth Her Legal Rights

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In December of 2010, **Bolivia** became the world's FIRST country to provide comprehensive legal rights to MOTHER NATURE by passing **Law 71**, better known as the "**LAW OF THE RIGHTS OF MOTHER EARTH.**"

The law recognizes the fact that ALL living things have equal rights and gives nature the same legal status that is granted to every human being.

The legislation focuses on the principles of HARMONIOUS LIVING and collective good. It posits that the Earth is a SACRED PLACE, a viewpoint which can be traced back to the Incan mythology of **PACHAMAMA**, known colloquially as "the mother of Earth and time."

The law defines "MOTHER EARTH" as a community of interdependent, interrelated and complementary living systems as well as organisms. An indivisible community with a common destiny.

In essence, the legislation will force the Bolivian government to ensure the well being of the natural world, as well as that of its citizens. One of the key objectives of the law is to prevent climate change to ensure that future generations can lead a better life.

The Bolivian government requested that rich nations should help the country to adapt to the effects caused by climate change as compensation for having created an environmental debt because of their high carbon emissions. According to the [2009 Oxfam Report](#), Bolivia, in particular, is vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of melting glaciers, increasing drought and flooding.

On the international level, the Bolivian government must promote the rights of Mother Earth, advocate peace and strive to eliminate chemical, nuclear and biological weapons. A 2009 amendment to Bolivia's constitution makes this law a part of their legal system overhaul, marking a shift from the developmental model of the western countries to that of the holistic concept of "LIVING WELL."

According to the law, the meaning of "living well" is the adoption of consumption patterns, conduct and behavior that help to avoid a degradation of nature. This calls for maintaining an ETHICAL as well as SPIRITUAL relationship with life. Thus, living well fosters collective HAPPINESS and complete fulfillment.

The draft of the law was prepared by UNITY PACT, an umbrella group formed by five social movements in Bolivia, as representatives of more than 3 MILLION people and the 36 indigenous groups of Bolivia. Many of them are small-scale farmers who continue to live on their ancestral properties. The law protects their livelihoods and diverse cultures from the impact of industrialization.

In addition to making the industrial operations more transparent, the law will enable people to regulate industry at ALL levels: local, regional and national. The law marks a FUNDAMENTAL shift as far as the exploitation of nature is concerned. It states that the sacred and fertile Mother Earth not only feeds and takes care of all the living things in her womb, but also exists in harmony and balance and constantly communicates with the cosmos.

The law enumerates seven specific [rights](#) to which Mother Earth and her constituent life systems, including human communities, are entitled to; those are the rights to:

1) LIFE: It is the right to the maintenance of the integrity of life systems and natural processes which sustain them, as well as the capacities and conditions for their renewal.

2) DIVERSITY OF LIFE: It is the right to the preservation of the differentiation and variety of the beings that comprise Mother Earth, without being genetically altered, nor artificially modified in their structure, in such a manner that threatens their existence, functioning and future potential.

3) WATER: It is the right of the preservation of the quality and composition of water to sustain life systems and their protection with regards to contamination, for renewal of the life of Mother Earth and all its components.

4) CLEAN AIR: It is the right of the preservation of the quality and composition of air to sustain life systems and their protection with regards to contamination, for renewal of the life of Mother Earth and all its components.

5) EQUILIBRIUM: It is the right to maintenance or restoration of the inter-relation, interdependence, ability to complement and functionality of the components of Mother Earth, in a balanced manner for the continuation of its cycles and the renewal of its vital processes.

6) RESTORATION: It is the right to the effective and opportune restoration of life systems affected by direct or indirect human activities.

7) LIVE FREE OF CONTAMINATION: It is the right for preservation of Mother Earth and any of its components with regards to toxic and radioactive waste generated by human activities.

The law is considered to be the **FIRST** instance of environmental law that gives **LEGAL PERSONHOOD** to the natural system, and may also allow for citizens to sue individuals and groups as part of "Mother Earth" in response to real and alleged infringements of its integrity.

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